and @ 33.33 per cent in case of North Eastern States, hilly areas and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes enterpreneurs. The scheme of Construction of Rural Godown has recently been revised to restrict subsidy on the storage projects for individual, companies and corporations @ 15 percent of the project cost.

Declining average agricultural growth rate

1838. SHRI R.K.ANAND: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the annual average agriculture growth rate has dipped from 4.9 per cent in the Eighth Five Year Plan to 1.3 per cent;

(b) if so, the reasons for the poor performance of the agriculture sector; and

(c) whether the agriculture sector is in a position fo face competition from the developed countries' agro-products, if not, the manner in which Government propose to strengthen it in the light of WTO agreement?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The annual average agriculture growth rate has declined from 4.7% in Eighth Plan to 1.2% in first three years of the 10th Five Year Plan period.

(b) Indian Agriculture continues to be heavily influenced by fluctuations in rainfall as about 60% of the net sown area is rainfed. The decline in the growth rate was due to weather related shocks caused mainly by deficiency in rainfall. Inadequate irrigation facilities also eroded the capacity of the agriculture sector to withstand such shocks.

(c) The Government is continuously monitoring the surge in imports of sensitive items on a regular basis. Over the last few years, several measures have been initiated for enhancing the level of protection to the farmers and boosting exports after the removal of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs.) Some of the specific measures taken in this regard are given below:

(i) Import duty on a number of agriculture products has been increased;

(ii) Import of all packaged commodities has been subjected to compliance of the standards as applicable on the domestic commodities;

(iii) Import of all primary agriculture products has been subjected to a import permit to be issued under the Plant Quarantine Order.

(iv) The Government has initiated various measures to promote the export of agriculture products which, *inter alia,* include setting up

of Agri-Export Zones to provide enhanced international market access, improved infrastructural facilities, better flow of credit, assistance for reducing the market costs as also removal of export restrictions.

(iv) In the WTO negotiations on agriculture, the development countries have been accorded Special and Differential treatment in all areas of the Agreement on Agriculture including tariff reduction, domestic support and export subsidies. They have also been allowed two special mechanisms, namely, Special Products and special Safeguard Mechanism in order to meet their food security, livelihood security and rural development needs.

Scientists-farm club

1839. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a plan to set up a scientists-farm club; and

(b) if so, the details of main activities of the club?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) There is no plan to set-up scientists-farm club by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The Council has established a network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) Farm science centres in the country as a model for technology assessment, refinement and demonstration unit in the country. In order to accelerate the process of dissemination of technology, a number of extension activities involving the interaction between the subject matter specialists and the farmers are organized by the KVKs, such as Advisory services, Diagnostic vistits, Ex-trainees' sammelans, Exhibitions, Field days, Film shows, Group discussions, Kisan gosthis, Kisan melas, and Seminars/Workshops.

Valuation of sale of Township of HFCL

1840. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting was held on 29th June, 2004 in Delhi under the Chairmanship of the then Minister of State (Chemicals & Fertilizers) with the officials of Goverment of West Bengal, Asansol-Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA), Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFCL) and others regarding finalisation of the valuation for outright sale of the township and water treatment plant of the closed Durgapur unit of M/s. HFCL to ADDA ;and